24 20
~~86~~. The method of claim ~~82~~, which additionally comprises maintaining an identification of those of said multiple sectors that are defective, and wherein erasing the combination of sectors includes avoiding the identified defective sectors.

25 20-24
~~87~~. The method of any one of claims ~~82-86~~, wherein erasing the combination of sectors includes erasing the combination of sectors in parallel.

27
26~~88~~. The method of claim ~~84~~, wherein designating the combination of sectors includes limiting the number of sectors that are erased in parallel in response to a predetermined power capability of the memory system.

27~~89~~. A method of operating a memory system having an array of EEPROM cells divided into multiple non-overlapping sectors that individually contain a plurality of said cells sufficient to store multiple bytes of data and which are erasable together, comprising:

(a) designating a combination of any one of multiple different combinations of a plurality of but less than all of said multiple sectors to be erased,

(b) erasing the designated combination of sectors without erasing others of said multiple sectors, and

(c) after the combination of sectors has been erased, writing data in at least some of the erased combination of sectors by programming the individual cells therein into one of more than two programmable states in order to store more than one bit of data per cell.--

**REMARKS**

By this Preliminary Amendment, the claims of the new continuation application with which this Amendment is being filed are being directed to an EEPROM system, and its operation, as already claimed in parent patent no. 5,418,752 and allowed application serial no. 08/407,916, but with an additional operational limitation included. The added limitation is that the individual memory cells are programmable into more than two states

in order to store more than one bit of data per cell. Claims 63-66 being added by this Preliminary Amendment correspond nearly exactly to claims 1-4 of patent no. 5,418,752 but with the multi-state limitation added to the end of the first paragraph of independent claim 63. Claims 67-89 herein correspond nearly exactly to allowed claims 70-92, respectively, of application serial no. 08/407,916 but with the multi-state limitation added to each of independent claims 67,71, 77, 82 and 89 herein.

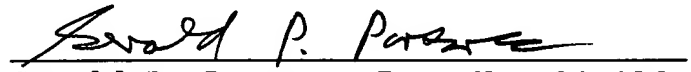
Although multi-state operation is mentioned in the present application specification, it is more completely discussed in two applications incorporated by reference into the specification at pages 11, 22 and 26. Since the referenced application serial no. 204,175 has issued as patent no. 5,095,344, the patent number is being added by this Amendment. The serial number of the second referenced application is also being added by this Amendment. The status of the second referenced application is that it has become abandoned in favor of a continuation-in-part application which matured into patent no. 5,172,338 and a division thereof into patent no. 5,163,021. Copies of the 4 patents referenced in these Remarks are being filed with this Amendment, for the convenience of the Examiner.

An Information Disclosure Statement is being prepared to include the references cited during the prosecution of parent patent no. 5,418,752, allowed application serial no. 08/407,916, and others. It is planned that this Statement be timely filed, with copies of the cited references, before the initial examination of this application.

An early examination and allowance of the present application are solicited.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dated: December 29, 1997



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